RESTORATION REVIEW

FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE

In Christ there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find,
His service is the golden cord
Close-binding all mankind.

Join hands, then, brother of the faith,
Whatever your race may be!
Who serves My Father as a son
Is surely kin to Me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,
In Him meet South and North,
All Christly souls are one in Him,
Throughout the whole wide earth.

—JOHN OXENHAM

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A Scriptural Call for Renewal . . .

FREEDOM TO RESPOND

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure which lay hidden in a field. A man found it, and hid it; and, as a result of his joy, away he goes, and sells everything that he has, and buys the field.—Matthew 13:44

Paul Tillich once referred to religion in our time as "the lost dimension of life," and observed that most people appear to be incapable of giving any serious thought to religion. Some are about to relegate religion to the antiquated past, insisting that it no longer has anything to say to modern man. For all practical purposes God is dead for contemporary man. Even the churches are so caught up in the sweep of secularism that the man who is serious about his religion is something of an oddball. Not only has our culture taught men how to be bishops without being religious, but it has taught men how to belong to the church without being spiritual.

A recent visitor to Russia observed that he found less interest in the sensate than in his native United States. We have to confess to our preoccupation with *things* and to our neglect of the higher disciplines. In terms of prayer, meditation, study, and the application of the mind to ideas we have to confess that even the church is undisciplined. In terms of social concern, whether the plight of the black man or the dope addict, we have to admit that even the church is indifferent.

This is to say that we do not behave like the man in the parable who rejoiced at what he had found, then made whatever sacrifice necessary to make it his own. It becomes a serious question as to whether most of us have really *found* anything. Whatever may be said of the Kingdom of God, it involves *finding.* And finding implies *searching.* Are we truly a seeking people? The greatest message of the ages has that vital word *seek* as part of it: *Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness . . . "*

Elton Trueblood some years ago attempted to describe our problem of secularism in terms of "a cut-flower civilization", meaning that so-called Christian America is trying to preserve its morals and values after having Cut away the roots that produced them, the Jewish-Christian tradition. It is an apt illustration for the church as well. We are too much like the cut-flower, divorced from its sources of strength and trying to stay alive in the artificial setting of a vase of water. We crowd ourselves into large hunks of real estate, busy ourselves with all sorts of services and programs, do a lot of going and spending. But we are cut away from the roots that produced us. The Christ is seldom a living reality amongst us. The Spirit of God is crowded from our hearts by our concern for things. Cut away from the roots as we are, we are no longer seekers with broken spirits. We are rather

satisfied to solidify our artificialities. The vases become more elaborate, the water deeper. But still we are cut away.

One of the truly great facts of life is that man *can* respond to the forces brought to bear upon him. Not only can he get in our of the rain, but he can build a dam in order to harness the power of the water that falls to earth. No man has to remain the way he is. He can change if he wants to. Will or will power is nothing more than desire. We say that one can lose weight if he has the will power. We are saying that he can lose weight if he desires to be slim more than he desires to overeat.

Man is free to respond. When he finds a treasure in a field, he can ignore it or do something about it. In Jesus' parable the man who found the treasure was overjoyed, and so there was an immediate response. He sells all he has in order to purchase the field. Jesus is telling us that it's worth any sacrifice in order to enjoy the peace and joy of the Kingdom.

Because man is free his response to God can be negative rather than positive. The birds that sing outside my window are responding to God, so to speak, but it is not a *free* response since they cannot do otherwise. Being free, man must respond to his Creator in one way or another, for he is faced with an option that is *alive, forced,* and *momentous,* to use William James' terms. It is alive because it relates personally to him as part of God's creation; it is forced in that he must decide one way or another; it is momentous because it concerns his eternal destiny. He cannot go on and on, postponing his decision, for this is a *negative* response.

The man in the parable made a *positive* response, but such a response always calls for something of one's self. In his case he had to sell all that he had. Any person is pleased to lay claim to a treasure he finds, but few are willing to make a sacrifice for it. In the case of the Kingdom it may be a surrender of one's pride, or his money, or his women. He doesn't want to give up what he loves for the sake of the treasure. The man in the parable loved the treasure in the field more than all his possessions. So his was a positive response.

He who responds negatively (which includes not responding at all) must take his flight from God. Since the price tag on the field is too high for him, he flees from it and is afar off. He may even become critical and attack the whole idea.

History is replete with such responses to God. Newton banished God from nature in his ventures into science, while Darwin banished Him from life in his evolutionary theory. Freud banished God from the human soul and Descartes banished Him from human thought. Karl Marx in his dialectical materialism banished God from society, while Nietzsche banished Him from existence, thus bequeathing to us the "God is dead" viewpoint.

God confronted each of these men as He confronts us all. Each one passed through the field, in his own peculiar circumstance, and saw the treasure, but did not experience sufficient joy to pay the price for the field. Not wanting God enough they chose instead to banish Him.

James Russell Lowell spoke this way of man's confrontation with God:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide;
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the right,

And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.
—the Editor

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MINI-UNITY MEETINGS

In the past few years there have been upward of a score of major unity efforts within discipledom. These have been rather extensively advertised and represent a great deal of planning. The programs have featured representative thinkers from all the major wings of our fractured movement. The meetings began with almost no help from the power centers of the brotherhood, but they continue with increasing support from the powers that be as well as the rank and file.

It now appears that such concentrated unity efforts will not be needed much longer, for they are giving way to what might be called the mini-unity meeting. These are gatherings at the grassroots level that arise spontaneously because of the desires of brethren in given areas. They have little planning behind them and are not efforts to bring brotherhood leaders together. They are alert, concerned, and intelligent disciples who have grown weary of our staid ways, people who want to move to new frontiers of faith and establish new contacts. The mini-meeting may be in a home, a cafeteria, or the fellowship hall of some church, and it is made up of preachers, elders, deacons and members from several of our factions. There are no "unity leaders" behind them and few big name preachers involved.

Those who have been responsible for the larger efforts should be gratified with this development, for the mini-unity meetings have been inspired at least in part by the more extensive efforts. Once together in the larger effort where they see firsthand what it can do

for spiritual depression, they go back home with a zeal to do something like it on a smaller scale.

Sometimes a few preachers from the Church of Christ and Christian Church get together in someone's office for prayer and study. Sometimes a young couple will invite a few other couples over to their home, crossing lines that could not have easily been crossed in their congregation. Sometimes there are regular meetings at neutral places, with the responsibility for it passed from one small group to the next. A list of interested people usually circulates, the ones to be informed of next meeting. The list has a way of growing, even without advertising.

It is part of "the underground church" in that it goes on, somewhat unobtrusively, with an indifference to the desires of the Establishment. We are pleased that these are not the efforts of folk who have left *us* or left *them.*

They are efforts within the church that manage to progress without the blessings of the church. It is the underground at work, but it is a *peaceful* underground. They are not out to start a "unity sect" nor do they have an ax to grind. They are not even trying to demonstrate, for they are willing for it to move along quietly and without notice. They seek only to be a blessing to those who share, to discover together what fellowship really means.

One brother, impressed with the emergence of so many mini-meetings, is making a study of the *why* of such gatherings. He wants to know why people are attracted to them and what they get from them, and he has sent out a questionnaire in hopes of getting an answer.

He wants to know if it is because in these small gatherings they get a chance to express themselves. Or is it because they are starved for the spiritual food that such gatherings may provide? Or is it curiosity? Or is it for the sake of new social contacts? Or is it an act of rebellion toward the home congregation so set in its ways?

Men are usually motivated by a cluster of desires rather than just one, but surely a predominate motive is the desire to realize the Lord's prayer and be one with their estranged brothers. To sit down and talk with a brother that you have for a lifetime dubbed an "anti" or a "digressive" or a "liberal" or a "fanatic" can be a liberating experience, especially when the setting is informal and friendly. Nobody is having a debate or anything. One doesn't have to take sides. You go over and pour yourself some coffee, sit down with Al, Dick, Mary, and Lou, and talk about Jesus. And about your problems. And your prejudices. Later you find out that Al and Mary belong to that "anti bunch" down the highway, while Dick and Mary belong to "those liberals" up at the Disciples church. You find yourself surprised that you all had so much in common, and you are amazed to find that the others love Jesus just like you do!

Hegel says that man's history is the story of his desire to be free. That is my answer to the brother who is asking about the *why* of these mini-meetings. Our people want to be free—free of mediocrity, superficiality, phoniness, and littleness.

For those who are uneasy about such meetings, and they are legion, brethren who fear something might happen to orthodoxy, I have news for them: *nothing can stop them!* The keepers of orthodoxy had better follow a "If you can't lick 'em, join 'em" strategy, for otherwise the underground may have all the real meat while the Establishment is left with only whey.

The thing to do is to encourage such efforts. Let them multiply. It was this spirit that moved the heart of Jewish religion from the temple to the synagogue, thus saving Judaism from spiritual anemia. If one needs a reason why the mini-meeting is emerging, he only needs to go to our churches on Sunday and Wednesdays, our two holy days, and witness for himself what intelligent brethren have to listen to, week in and week out—or what they have formed a habit of *not* listening to. It is almost unbelievable that it could be so bad without a lot of planning and effort in boredom.

To those who are carrying on these mini efforts, and to others who would like to start, we are suggesting some guidelines that might prove helpful. To those who are attracted to the idea but are reluctant to try, we would urge them to venture forth with prayer and faith. Once a quiet word makes the rounds, you will be surprised how many of our loved ones in Christ are longing for just such experiences. There are more free men in Christ than you might think. Certainly this is not the season for the Elijah blues.

1. *They should be spontaneous rather than forced.*

Until there is an apparent desire for freedom, then be content to say an occasional word or send out a few papers that might provoke thought. Don't try to *start* unity meetings, but *reap* one that is already flowering in the hearts of men, Don't urge, just invite. If you are in Churches of Christ, you might begin with a home gathering of a few free minds for exchange of ideas. Later the suggestion could be made that some of God's other sheep might like to attend. Invite the Christian Church minister over and ask him to bring two or three interested people with him,

2. *Do whatever is necessary to avoid any aura of faction.*

You don't want to start a sect and you don't want anybody to break away from his home congregation. So the time of meetings should not conflict, and those involved should remain loyal to the home church. People who are mad and want to cause trouble should not be invited. You can pray for them!

If your motives are impugned after all such caution, and they will be, don't argue or try to defend yourself. Just invite those who are criticizing to the next session. Just say something like, "I've been wanting you to come and meet brother Jones from the Christian Church, and this is a good time to invite you."

3. *Leave the controversial unity leaders out of it.*

With a "do-it-yourself" kit you can move along without the help of experts. The kit is your own broken spirit, the sacrifice that God says he desires the most. If your heart bleeds for our fractured condition, then God can take you and do wonders. You don't need Abilene or St. Louis or Wichita or Arlington or New York or Denton. And Lufkin, Austin, and Nashville would be of no help, So do it yourself, you and the Lord.

4. *Keep it small.*

Be faithful to mini. Don't start counting noses in measuring success. Just plant and water and let God give the increase. Someone else can start one in his home, you know.

5. *Set up a few ground rules.*

The rule above all rules is love, but the only love that some have is to hear themselves talk. So the meeting should be at least partly structured, with some plan, with somebody directing it, Small talk before and after is all right, but there should be that hour when you get down to business. Some controversial essay could be read and discussed, with everyone encouraged to say something about it. A priest or rabbi could be invited to answer questions about his religion. Certainly the irenic preachers in our own various groups could be invited to share, but no one should be allowed to dominate the meeting. A basic ground rule should be that each one remain agreeable even when he disagrees. And it should be made clear that it is a meeting of free minds in Christ, with no one required to surrender any truth he holds. It is a *sharing* experience of people who love Jesus.

Oh, yes, invite Minnie to the mini-meeting. In those in which I have engaged I notice the women receive a great blessing from them. It helps to atone for the otherwise second-class citizenship she has in the kingdom of God as per meetinghouse religion.—*the Editor*

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Alexander Campbell's "Synopsis of Reform"

THE PLACE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN RESTORATION

Alexander Campbell had considerable to say about the relationship of the Bible to the task of restoration, the sacred work that was so close to his heart. In his day a discovery of the role of the scriptures was made difficult by the place gained by various creeds, It was a matter not only of restoring the Bible to its authoritative position but of exposing the creeds as divisive and sectarian.

In our day it is different as we attempt to explain the role of the Bible in reference to such ecumenical concerns as unity and evangelism. Creeds still exist of course, but they can hardly any longer be pointed to as the cause of division. Our problems in reference to

the place of the Bible are much more serious, for there are now divergent views regarding inspiration, revelation and interpretation. In many communions the Bible simply is not accepted with the significance that it once was. The century since Campbell has given us modern biblical criticism, which has challenged some of the orthodox views of the Bible. Even within the larger brotherhood of Restoration churches we have those who not only reject the verbal inspiration of the scriptures, but to whom psychology, sociology and human experience are viewed as reliable sources for the word of God as the Bible itself.

In the other direction are those who are naive enough to suggest that the Bible only need be read to be understood, that "It says what it means and means what it says," and is in no need of interpretation. The answer to our divisions thus becomes a simple *Take the Bible for what it says.* It is noteworthy that those who talk this way the most are as eager as any to give their explanations of what the Bible means. Seldom are they satisfied merely to pass out Bibles to folk. They choose rather to spend huge sums of money to see to it that one of their men is on hand to make sure that the Bible is understood the way they understand it.

This evil is compounded by the phony notion that in some way we have become infallible guardians of the Scriptures. Many of our folk believe that only our preachers really understand the Bible, that others simply are incapable of interpreting correctly. Our rather extensive use of "sectarian" commentaries does not really contradict this fact, for even here the one who consults Clarke, or Barnes, or Barclay has those areas blocked off in his mind in which such scholars are not reliable and cannot be expected to be right. Of course he has to be wrong if he says anything other than what Churches of Christ have always taught.

Even more serious is the idea emerging in our own ranks, as it has long prevailed generally, that only the professionally trained preacher or professor is a reliable exponent of the Word. There is an increasing number of complaints from "laymen", who have long been close students of the Bible, that the college-trained preacher, and especially the visiting professor from Abilene or Nashville, resents being questioned about anything at all either in a class or what he says from the pulpit. This is further evidence that the clergy system is becoming solidified in our own ranks, and with this of course come the assumed clerical prerogatives.

To all this may be added the problem of a kind of bibliolatry that sees the Bible as a book of magic, as if most any problem can be solved if enough passages are brought to bear. We thus rely more on *print* than on a *Person.* It was a baby that God gave to save the world, not a book; but some of us worship the book more than the Person. We have succeeded in making "True to the Bible" mean something different from "True to Christ."

It is not surprising, therefore, that in our efforts to heal our divisive wounds there are more references to the Bible being the basis of unity than to the Christ. The implication is that we can unite upon a book, whereas the truth must be that it is only in a Person that oneness will ever be realized. The Bible may well be seen as the telescope that brings the Christ into focus in all His glorious reality. The Bible thus introduces us and acquaints us with the Person who can make us one. Filling our minds with biblical doctrines will not do it, however important they may be. Nor does "Taking the Bible for what it says" have any relevance to our problem, for each one has his own idea about what the Bible says, whether instrumental music or congregational cooperation, and he is too often inclined to make his interpretation a test of fellowship and thus preserve his faction.

All this points to a need for a reexamination of the place of scripture in our present efforts. It may be that the judgments of Campbell will prove helpful.

The Bible must be proposed as a book of facts, not of doctrines or opinions. It must be understood and regarded as arranged upon the principle of cause and effect, or that action is to produce corresponding action.

Campbell's Lockean philosophy shows through when he starts talking about the nature of scripture. A century earlier John Locke, the noted empiricist, began a reformation in philosophy which rejected speculative theories in favor of cool, objective experimentation. The mind is capable of understanding what needs to be understood, Locke argued, if it is not hindered by ambiguous theories and speculations.

So in Campbell's thinking about the Bible. It is a book that needs to be taught, to be sure, but it is to be taught like any other literature—in terms of its facts, principles, and propositions. He realized that the Bible is a book subject to speculation and theorizing. Opinions may abound about many of its subjects. All this is all right if one will keep such an amusing enterprise to himself and not make it a part of his public teaching. He believed that divisions could be traced to those theories about scripture that were made tests of fellowship.

Campbell employed five key words to describe what may be called a commonsense view of the Bible, which is to say that the Bible is to be read as a newspaper would be read. The words are *fact, testimony, faith, feeling,* and *action.* These terms, rightly appropriated in Bible study, would cure many a sectarian ill, he believed.

All five terms apply to the same point in scripture, only from different perspectives. For example, the gift of Jesus is the love of God in *fact.* When that love of God is reported by the proclamation of the apostles, it is the love of God in *testimony.* When the apostolic preaching is believed, it is the love of God in *faith.* The faith arouses gratitude, joy, repentance. This is the love of God in *feeling.* When one responds to the love of God by obeying the divine precepts, this is the love of God in our *action.* This is what he means by saying

each action is intended to produce a corresponding action. God gives His Son (action) and we respond by obeying the gospel (action).

Campbell explains that a *fact* is something said or done; *testimony* is a report of it in words; *faith* is the belief of those words; *feeling* is the power of those words; *action* is the effect of those words.

Thus we have the Bible in terms of cause and effect, for it is the testimony that causes faith, the faith causes feeling, and feeling causes action or obedience. It is this cause and effect principle that makes the Bible different from all philosophical and speculative systems. To see the Bible as *facts* that set up a cause and effect reaction is to see it as distinct from all theorizing.

Theories and abstract doctrines are matters purely intellectual, Campbell insisted, and are addressed to the understanding rather than to the heart. The *facts* of scripture, the grand principles and propositions, are, on the contrary, directed to the heart, using the intellect only as a means of reaching the heart.

This approach to scripture could be most helpful in healing our divisions, for Campbell is saying that only those things directed to man's heart, those *facts* calculated to illicit a response from man's feelings, can be the basis of Christian communion.

To run down the list of things that have led to our ugly divisions: instrumental music, societies, cooperative enterprises, classes, cups, millennial theories—is to see that they are hardly related to the *facts* of the Bible that are directed to the heart of man. They are rather our own preferences and prejudices, opinions and theories.

With this help from Campbell we may issue this as a challenge to our thinking: *Nothing is to be made a test of fellowship that is not based upon the facts of scripture that are intended to touch man's heart and lead him to repentance and obedience.*

This conforms to what Campbell has said elsewhere about fellowship being based upon *one fact* and *one act.* The event of Christ is of course the one great fact. Obedience by being immersed into Christ is the one great act. This is a shorter version of what he has said above.

The Bible alone, instead of any human creed, as the only rational and solid foundation of Christian union and communion.

While we appreciate this emphasis upon the Bible in reference to Christian unity, we are convinced that it is more accurate to say that it is the Christ revealed in the Bible who is the basis of unity. In view of what Campbell said about the foregoing principle, we conclude that this is what he meant. There was of course union among believers before the New Covenant scriptures were ever written. While the scriptures solidify the union through their comfort and instruction, it is a Person and not a book that makes us one. This is what Campbell is saying when he speaks of our being united on *the facts of the Bible,* or better still, *the great fact of Christ* and our response to it.

What Campbell is after in this principle of reform are the creeds that in his day formed the basis of fellowship. He would not have objected to a creed that merely explained or professed and did not legislate. His quarrel was over creeds being made terms of communion. And is not the complaint equally valid in our own day, except that now it is *unwritten* creeds that brethren bind on each other? If a man places a requirement for fellowship before his brother that God does not make a condition for pardon, then that requirement in his creed. This is the point of Campbell's principle of looking to the Bible for the ground of union, and not to one's pet theories about the Bible.

The reading and expounding of the sacred scriptures in public assemblies instead of text preaching, sermonizing, and philosophizing.

It may be on this point that the heirs of Campbell's movement are most vulnerable, for we are increasingly creating pulpit-centered services and preacher-dominated congregations. We have too many sermonizers and theorists of scripture and not enough *expounders* of the Word. One only needs to listen carefully to what is said from our pulpits: to realize that the people cannot possibly learn much from what is said. One mainline minister conceded in a recent statement that "The churches in Dallas are suffering from spiritual starvation." This kind of poverty with our highly paid clergy?

Campbell's idea was that the one who stands before the congregation should open the word of God, read from its pages at some length, and explain the meaning, relating it to the problems of life. This calls for long and careful study and an understanding of the principles of the Bible, along with a grasp of the historical connections.

He saw the preaching of a sermon, or text preaching, which is so often based on skeleton outlines, as something entirely different. It may perform a ritual but it does little educating, and those who so impose upon an audience need know little about the Bible.

What do our ministers know about the great themes of the book of Isaiah? How often do they expound on the prophetic sections of the Bible? Do they ever read considerable portions of *Hebrews* or *Romans* and expound upon the significant subjects of the Christian faith? Do they ever take a book like *Philippians*, explain its background and develop its great thesis.

In view of what one may witness in listening even to our *name* preachers in meetings, we may suppose the charge of Campbell has application even to our own situation: "This scheme (of sermonizing) has filled the pulpit with a race of pygmies in the Bible as diminutive as ever lived."

Renewal comes not only through a recovery of the Bible and it alone as our guide in matters of faith and practice, but through a respect for the scriptures that will make us careful and dedicated students and effective interpreters of the word. Being a successful preacher of sermons could be something entirely different from this.

The right of private opinion in all matters not revealed in contradistinction from the common faith, without the forfeiture of Christian character or Christian privilege.

No one practiced more consistently the principle of the right of private opinion than Alexander Campbell. His own father had strong Calvinistic convictions till his dying day. Some of his closest coworkers, including Barton Stone, had views that called for controversial exchanges, but he never once drew the line of fellowship on a brother who differed with him.

We will all agree with Campbell on the right of private opinion, but we have great difficulty in distinguishing between opinion and faith. We will not allow another brother his opinion on instrumental music, for to us it is a matter of faith. On the other hand we insist on keeping the Sunday School on the ground of our opinion, while to the non-class folk it is a matter of faith.

The way out of this dilemma is found in Campbell's reference to *the common faith.* Elsewhere he speaks of it as *the faith* as distinct from *faith.* It is true that one man's opinion is another man's faith, but it is not *the faith* or *the common faith.* Man may have "faith" in eating only vegetables (Rom. 14:2) or "faith" that he should not eat food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8:7).

In all such areas there is to be liberty of opinion, and this would include the likes of organs, classes, societies. Our "faith" (opinion) about these things will differ from the "faith" (opinion) of others. But *the faith* transcends all this and makes us one in Christ, despite the differences. *The faith* is the gospel or the good news: of what God has done for us through Christ. When we believe this and obey it in baptism we are one in Christ. Those *won* by the gospel are *one* in Christ.

Once in Christ our different temperaments and backgrounds will lead to wide divergence of opinion about a lot of things. Some of us will believe that clean things are really unclean, and Paul says: "If a man believes that something is unclean, then to him it is unclean." So what we call his *opinion* is to him a matter of *faith,* and is of great importance. But since *the faith* still makes us one in Christ, we do not allow this to be a serious problem.

There cannot possibly be any other answer to the agony of division. We will never in this world see clean things and unclean things, sinful things and sinless things, alike. Each must be allowed the liberty of his own "faith", while recognizing that it is *the faith* that stands as the only condition to Christian fellowship.—*the Ed.*

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CAUGHT IN CHURCH

RICHARD E. SMITH

Not too long ago the teenage members of a Bible class were asked by their teacher to write what they would like to be doing if "the Lord came today." The responses were both interesting and revealing. They were published in an article in one of "our" papers as solid evidence that our young people have their hearts set on the right things. The writer made the statement that he feels that their responses reflect the views of a great host of young people in the Lord's church.

Two-thirds of those responding to the question expressed the desire to be found worshiping "in church," praising or praying to God. A third wished to be found teaching someone about Christ, doing good, or helping someone. The majority seemed convinced that the most noble and desirable activity was to be "in worship" or "in church." In light of the writer's elation over their responses, this point of view obviously squared nicely with his own. The validity of the basis for his elation is what we would like to examine here.

On the face of it the fact that most of the kids want to be in the church house when the Lord returns sounds pretty good. If they have been taught that this is the ultimate expression one can make to please the creator, the response is a most logical one. However, logical though it may be, the response is, in the eyes of this writer, a very disappointing one.

A quick look at the "religious" activity of Jesus doesn't give us much cause for the above mentioned elation. The inspired writers don't seem to focus much on the time he spent "in church." At 12 you find him amazing the scholars in Jerusalem. Almost 20 years later he makes a comment in the Nazareth synagogue and is violently ejected by an angry mob. At the temple we find him tipping over the money changers' tables and driving the animals out with a whip. Seems as if he stirred up trouble whenever he got near a "church". His deep moments in prayer seemed to be experienced on a lonely hill top or in a quiet garden. His favorite teaching spots included a hillside, a community well, Martha's living room and the dinner table. His "church-related" experiences don't help us very much.

The nearest thing we can find to a discussion of church houses or religious places by Jesus is in his conversation with the woman at the well. His language there makes it pretty clear that God isn't worshiped in some *place* but *in Spirit*, He seems to say, "You Samaritans here and those Jews over there make a big thing about doing the right *things* in the right *place*, but you're both wrong. God is a Spirit and he is truly worshiped by your attitude toward him, wherever you are."

The essence of Jesus' message is to *live* abundantly not go to church abundantly. The only definition given of "pure religion" concerns itself with helping widows and orphans, not with church house activities. With Jesus came the first "religion" which claimed the

body of man as its temple and God's real dwelling place. A man can no longer enter a "sanctuary" to pray or worship. He is the sanctuary. He is the *holy place.* By virtue of the indwelling of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, a man's feet are forever on holy ground. He is continually "before the altar" and in "the House of God." Thus his every activity takes place in the presence of God. His whole life becomes an offering, a living sacrifice. Whatever he does "in word or deed" he does it all in the name of the Lord. The everyday has thus been clothed with a nobleness and a holiness which it did not have before. The kitchen sink or the corner gas station becomes a holy place by virtue of the one who labors there who honors God by acknowledging his presence in the Spirit. The whole life becomes one grand act of worship. Everything is done in partnership with God. Wherever one goes he takes with him the Holy Guest. When every thought is "brought into captivity" and one attains the mind of Christ, it is never possible to leave the House of the Lord or "go home from church." Every activity becomes in this sense a holy one when one's life is hid with Christ in God.

Two-thirds of the young people wanting to be found "in church" at the Lord's return is not encouraging to me at all. I submit that this desire is the result of a deformed and distorted concept of Christ's teaching and represents a faith based on religiosity rather than a real understanding of God's will. It seems as if we're wanting to make a last minute good impression on the Lord by doing the right things in the right place. If we share the view of these young people we have been deceived into thinking that the assembled church is holier than the dispersed church, that there is a time for religious activity and a time for secular activity, that God is more pleased with the former than with the latter. But for the saint there is no secular activity. His whole week, is devoted to the glory of God, not just the moments when he is assembled with other saints.

What then of the assembly? Is it to be despised? God forbid. It should be a precious time, a period of refreshing. The saints come together to share (*koinonia*) and it is a delight to be a part of it. One is lifted up, encouraged, inspired, made whole again by the experience. The Christian assembly should be to the week's life what a hearty meal is to a day's work. The meal is not an end in itself but rather a means of strength and sustenance for the day. The assembly sustains one in like manner for the week.

A hand holding a hymn-book is no more noble than one with a hoe. To drink from a communion cup is no more to be praised than to sip water from a bucket while raking hay in the hot sun. (Though certainly the former may be far more precious and meaningful to the participant than the later, though he should feel heartfelt thanks for both.) The relationship "in spirit and truth" is no less in the hayfield than it is in the church house. If anything the odds are in favor of the hayfield. The Psalms of David seem to have been inspired under the open sky. Some of the great literature of the New Testament was written in prisons in Rome and on Patmos. None of it seems to have been written "in church."

As I discussed this article with my own teenaged daughter she called my attention to the fact that the few scriptures which seem to refer to what people will be found doing at His coming are all concerned with the ordinary affairs of life; working in the field, grinding grain, in bed asleep. No account is given of anyone being "taken" from the church house though surely some will be, I sincerely hope, because that is where many seem to spend quite a few hours of each week.

In essence it seems to boil down to two basic questions: 1. Do we really believe that God dwells in a man and not within some building? 2. Is God really more pleased with "corporate worship" than with anything else we do? I would hope that we could answer "yes" to the first question and "no" to the second. I contend that the fewer "church meetings" we could get by with, the better off we'd all be. I know this has been said before but I have often wondered what might take place if some church of 500 or more members simply canceled the Sunday night sermon and went out and visited—say by twos—in 250 homes that night. No filmstrips. No tracts or leaflets. No invitations to the church house. Just an effort to show love and concern. We would hope that in such visits the conversation might naturally get around more to Jesus than to "the church". Yet even if we didn't manage to talk about anything but their needs, their concerns and their anxieties, what a difference it would make to lonely people! Might it not be far more uplifting to our own souls than just hearing another sermon? Would God be disappointed or delighted? If this happened *every* Sunday night in lieu of the usual, the one congregation we've described could have an impact on 1,000 homes a month. An impact of love! Perhaps a "miss-a-meeting" clubs of this nature might produce more results than missing a meal. Surely we cannot believe that God is more pleased to see us huddling by ourselves in our church house, listening to sermons when we could be out giving comfort to lonely people, hungry for some attention or affection.

No, I don't have any particular desire to be caught in the church house when Jesus comes again. Though I've had some grand experiences in church houses and have been much refreshed by such, I know that I don't have to be there to obtain refreshing from the living water which wells up within a man unto eternal life. I would hope I could feel just as "ready" for Jesus if I am at the office, tossing a football with my son, or cleaning out the garage. My security lies neither in where I am nor in what I am found doing but rather in *whose* I am and the knowledge of *His* presence in my very being. What more could one want?—*Dallas Junior College District, Texas Building, Dallas.*

It is not the greatness of a man's means that makes him independent, so much as the smallness of his wants.—*William Corbett*

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ON GETTING BACK TOGETHER

JAMES P. SWINNEY

We regret to report that the author of this piece was killed when his private plane crashed near Lake Tahoe in Nevada, a short time after sending it to us for publication. Church of Christ in background, Jim Swinney in recent years discovered to his delight that he had far more brothers in Christ than he realized. He died a growing person. One of his new friends, a Christian Church pastor, prepared a statement about the deceased, which follows this article. It says something important. There is drama here—*Christian* drama. A brother from First Christian writing about his new Church of Christ friend in this way. It is a loving illustration of the point of the essay.—Ed.

The quest for rapprochement among the three major splits of the Restoration Movement is gaining popularity. Certainly many members of the three groups—mostly ministerial personnel insist it is an impossible dream. But on a grass roots level there is considerable interest, maybe even impatience. For example, in recent issues of *The Christian,* a Disciples magazine, no fewer than four articles have appeared probing the question of our getting back together again. Those who feel that such attempts are futile have considerable reason. Anyone of considerable information who has studied the curiosities of the split of 1906 and the later split of the 20's, has reason to suspect that the motives for division were not always as honorable as might be thought. Especially when one discovers that it was a group of eight men from Nashville who approached Washington D.C. to separate the instrumentalists from the non-instrumentalists, thus taking into their own hands the making of division in he most precise way they could—affecting a difference in the fellowship titles for their chaplains.

I remember a professor of psychology at one of our Church of Christ schools feeling that there were more differences among denominations than between them. His feeling is particularly well justified when one looks at the heirs of the Campbell-Stone movement. Opinions have driven us far from each other even though we claim the same heritage. And each of our factions is further splintered into groups each claiming to be the one with the right opinion. Opinions will characterize us as long as we live. And one of the interesting things about humanity is that opinions within a man change from time to time. Recognition of this dynamism of opinion is hardly a vice. But imposing conformity of one's opinion on others, and deprecating their thinking for themselves is.

I am more familiar with the Church of Christ than with the other divisions of this movement, although I have been moving rather freely among them all recently. Hence, the several splinters of the Church of Christ are more obvious to me, and there are some

twenty of them. One might well wonder if we shouldn't first try to reunite our own "fellows-in-name" before trying a broader scheme. But this points out a faulty method of union. We will, I think, never be able to reach total agreement of matters concerning practice. We shall never be able to unite in one total opinion in which there are no disagreements. Therefore, the union must come in the area of toleration and love. It is hard to like someone who is different. But is it right to refuse to fellowship someone who disagrees with us on some point of doctrine? If a brother expresses his opinion that the book of James is not inspired, would this provide grounds for disfellowship? How about burning him at the stake? Is belief in the virgin birth really necessary for salvation, or can a man entertain honest doubts? Opinion s characterize us. Christians must learn to tolerate those who hold different opinions. Then we will be making headway toward unity.

The Restoration Movement was begun as a unity movement. Oddly, there were several basic issues which divided the early restorers in opinion, but not in purpose or practice. How was that possible without the exercise of brotherly tolerance? But what began as a unity movement has now matured into apathetic, satisfied division.

I sincerely hope that we can get back together. But I know it cannot be done on the basis of total agreement. It will be done only on the basis of toleration for others. It will be in understanding that because one believes a certain opinion to be true, it gives him no right to use the disfellowship syndrome to liquidate the opposition. In short, when the Restoration Movement starts acting like a movement with restoration on its mind, and when the church starts acting like the church, then we will have hope of unity. It will come when we understand the real purpose of the church, and not before.

The church exists not to protect men, but to prepare them. Of the several resources which the church can provide, one of the most fundamental is the free market place of ideas where, without fear of retribution, men can express, debate, analyze, test, and forever search for the truth, wherever that search may lead.

However considerable the struggle to maintain the freedom of the marketplace, it is made rational and effective only if those who use it do not abuse it. Only disciplined faith in the time honored and time tested principles of integrity, honesty, objectivity, and a respect for the beliefs and rights of others can avoid that abuse.

Intolerance, ostracization, boycott, pious condemnation and public vengeance, which are old and familiar devices of the protectors of tradition, never seek the reality but only the sham of religious mystery. It is a frightened, artificial, shallow, irrelevant and irreverant sect which discourages men from thinking for themselves, and which threatens honest inquiry with hollow give but casual honor to ispunishment. In the name of truth, the tegrity, honesty, objectivity and tolerance.

—James P. Swinney is professor of speech, University of Nevada, Reno.

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IN MEMORIUM

W. L. THOMPSON

It was the fall of 1968 when I first met Jim Swinney. He visited the First Christian Church of Reno to see what this group of Christians meant by Christian faith and commitment. This was not an easy step for Jim to take; all his Christian heritage discouraged such seeking. However, Jim was searching.

His religious heritage included carefully worked out answers to all life's problems, neatly packaged. The wrappings covered answers that increasingly seemed inadequate to him. His education had included the A.B. degree as well as the Ph.D. (the latter was in Speech from the University of Southern California). His experience was broadened by an unhappy early marriage and his constant subjection to the probing questions of young university minds. He wanted answers that were rooted more firmly in reality. Doctrinal systems had been his bread and butter from youth; he had them memorized and could debate them, taking either side, at will. He had found doctrinal systems powerless to answer life' s deepest questions. "Who am I" "What is my purpose?" What does God want of my life?"

From the fall of 1968 until his untimely death, in an air crash, we were very close friends. He shared with me the trauma of his transition from binding dogma to liberating faith. He always hoped someone would understand the earnestness and genuineness of his search. I sought to offer that understanding. At the First Christian Church of Reno he had an opportunity to rethink the basis and nature of his faith. As a gospel preacher I sought to point him to the living Christ through whom new life can come, while not finding fault with any of the doctrinal systems he had learned by rote.

Jim was a great debater. Along about the spring of 1969 he made this comment to me: "Bill, I am convinced that if a religious truth is so obscure that it has to be debated, it cannot be important to God." No statement was of more liberating influence for a young man whose grandfather was one of America's most powerful men of words. I could not agree with him more.

The First Christian Church of Reno provided a home for Jim, as he searched the Scriptures afresh for their hidden meaning. Few people who heard his lessons or his sermons knew that he was dealing with his own soul as he taught and preached. Few knew that his loyalty to his past, a past that related him to those he loved dearest, his parents, was in constant conflict with his loyalty to Jesus Christ. Some in the church, thinking their denominational loyalty was essential to their own salvation, offered inadequate support to one whose search might have helped even them to come into the full light of Christian

freedom. Most in the church joined with Jim in a new and exciting effort to find the essential core of faith.

I flew up over the ridge, over south Lake Tahoe, with Jim when he took me to a meeting at Stockton in the spring of 1969. We met with preachers who were planning for a summer youth camp. It was a beautiful flight, there and back. Jim loved to soar into the sky—he could see widely and think clearly. We talked of many things that day. Now that same ridge, just east of the lake, has claimed his life.

The day the news came to me I had just written Jim to tell him he was second on the list of choices to address the preachers who might attend the 8th Assembly of the World Convention of Churches of Christ to meet in Adelaide, Australia, in 1970. We wanted him to deal with the communication of the faith in an age of pulpit doubt! What a magnificent address he would he able to deliver.

Farewell to you, Jim! May the living God, who is so much larger than doctrinal systems theologies and organizations, receive you unto Himself, as His child of faith. May your golden voice fill heaven itself as you praise our common Lord Jesus Christ.

W. L. Thompson is executive director, European Evangelistic Society, Box 268, Aurora, Illinois 60507.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

That Chart!

This is to inform our readers that we still have a fistful (an appropriate term) of those charts on “The Church of Christ Establishment.” Business has been good. They have gone to and fro across the brotherhood. We are pleased that in these perilous times there are still many with a sense of humor. With a price of 25 cents for one and 35 cents for two, many sent a dollar with specific instructions with what to do with the change. And my dear Ouida insists that all such generosity cease, for already she has coming, once in the stands at the Super Bowl (on *chart* money!) 16 hot dogs, 18 cokes, and 13 bags of popcorn!

We commend you for your sense of humor. Seriously, this has long been one of our failures: our inability to laugh at the appropriate time and to take some issues less seriously than we have. Who will do an article on that subject for us? For your trouble we'll proffer a hot dog, a coke, and a bag of popcorn!

Mission Awards

Speaking of writing, some of our sophisticated writers might like to try their style with an article for *Mission,* Box 326, Oxford, Ohio 45056. First prize is 150.00. The point is to so write as to bring the biblical message to bear powerfully and compassionately on the realities of the present world. You can write for further information, and you can subscribe for 4.00.

Lewis' Article

At first I found myself rebelling, but as I strived for an open mind and spirit, I saw what I thought to be a great truth.

There is no Mariolatry as some have stated. Rather I see an example to help sons and daughters draw ever closer to their heavenly Father.

As Mary gave soul, body and spirit totally to God, so you and I must do the same. This is not a worship of Mary the mother of Jesus, but a perfect example of what is expected of each person naming Christ as Lord.—*California*

The Church of Christ has gone completely overboard in an attempt to ignore Mary. However, I'll have to do some careful thinking about some things in his article. I hope I can be objective about it and not let my indoctrination against Mariolatry keep me from being rational. I'll say one thing, Warren is certainly capable of thinking for himself.—*Oregon*

It has been our good pleasure to know and worship with a fellowship of Catholics who are seeking a closer walk with our Lord. . . However, the question of Mary's place in the Christian Way has left us in a quandery. Warren has, I believe, been given a real answer to our prayers.—*Illinois*

I am pleased to see Warren Lewis' article published in *Restoration Review—New York* (a fellow editor)

To me, a Mary, it was beautiful. We have left her out, she being too Catholic. It blessed me to think of her place in the birth of my Jesus and His body of believers.—*California*

The responses that we have had thus far to Lewis' piece on Mary have all been positive. Those of you who had a negative reaction should write us and state your case.

The Coming New Day

There is a grass roots movement that is bringing all segments of religious people together where an honest, seeking and spiritual hunger is being manifested such as has never been.—*Florida*

The lines of communication are up again and we do pray they will stay up. Before these unity meetings we could not even look at each other without hating. Now we can meet together and realize that we are brethren.—*West Virginia*

This is an orthodox congregation composed of orthodox Church of Christ people. But they are not as orthodox as they appear. As you get acquainted and let an occasional "radical" statement drop, they open up and the truth comes out. They are fed up. Fed up with traditional preaching the official conclusions and positions without regard to the scriptures. Fed up with dull, insipid worship services that leave you more tired than inspired. Fed up with a leadership that is afraid to act boldly in the name of Jesus Christ. Many are hanging on, and some have already slipped away.—*Texas*

I have been enrolled in a spiritual disaster area for the past two years (he names a Church of Christ college—*Ed*.), I have come to depend on your intriguing magazine, among others, for moral reinforcement.

I was determined to preach the college down, but came to realize that condemnation of the disease would not cure it. Some "big" Christians helped me to see that love was the cure. It was my first real acquaintance with love, though I was born among those *elite* of the world that have tbe Truth . . .

When I tell others about the peace of mind that was shown to me by Jesus and see them get a flicker of it also, I know it must be real. I have never tried drugs, but I am willing to testify to anyone that has done so that he can experience the best and most prolonged "high" he has ever had by turning on with Jesus. . .

Would it embarrass you if I were to tell you that I love you.—*Texas*

You might be interested to know what has happened in the church where I am a member. The church is mostly rural. When we came here five years ago we were the only folks with even a college degree. It was "two songs and a prayer . . .," King James only (the brethren even passed a law saying KJV only its still in the minutes!). And all white folks, of course.

Since then things have happened. No one person is responsible, unless one has faith enough to believe it is the doing of God. Today the membership is much more mixed, although the rural cultural climate is still in the majority; but there are several professors, a bunch of students, business people, etc. And nearly one-fourth are black (the most integrated church of any stripe in the area). Sunday morning we worship God. No 30 minute sermons. But praise, prayer, exhortations, sentence prayer (even a woman joined in once—it was a bit jarring), offering, and all centered on Lord's Supper.— *in the midwest*

With Dudley Lynch having gone the way of all original editors, only you and Ketcherside keep me going.—*Florida*

My contact with community groups reveals a discouraging disregard for elementary human dignity and the suffering of the poor. “Christians” are no exception. I have located 9 churches of Christ. None manifest concern with anything outside their respective meeting houses. This includes two all-black churches. One Congregational minister, one Methodist (black), one Presbyterian, and a Catholic priest are getting involved, yes, and one Episcopalian. — *California*

With the exception of the last selection or two, these testimonials reflect a new spirit of change among us, the drawing of a new day. We are somewhat in advance of what I would have predicted for the end of the 60’s. Believe me, by the grace if God what we call the Church of Christ will be something quite different by the end of the 70’s. This is not to say that all the changes taking place are for the good. I fear that the reaction to our anti-intellectualism is carrying some reformers too far in the other direction. But the changes that allow for the free play of ideas and wholesome differences cannot help but prove a great blessing.

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BOOK NOTES

The publisher of *Voices of Concern* has announced that the supply will soon be gone. We are down to our last 25 copies in this office. This book will not and cannot be republished. They are 3.50 on a first come, first served basis. To those not acquainted with this controversial volume need only be told that it is a collection of critical essays on Church of Christism, edited by Robert Meyers, minister, Riverside Church of Christ, Wichita.

The Child’s Story Bible by Catherine Vos is a large, handsome volume that you will be pleased to own for your children. The pictures are in vivid color and modern. There are 97 stories interestingly told, ranging from *How the World Began* to *The Visions of the Apostle John.* Here is an effective way to entertain children while teaching them—and learning something yourself while you are at it! It is a bargain at 6.50.

The Jerusalem Bible is more than the Bible itself, for it contains the Apocrypha as well, along with some of the most valuable notes of interpretation that you will find anywhere. It is a handsome volume and would make an ideal gift for one who appreciates having

different translations. One will cost you around 20.00 most places, but while they last our price is 15.00, which you can pay in three payments of 5.00 each.

The Hazard of the Die by James R. Wilburn, is the story of Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement. This book will show you how Fanning was as big as the frontier America that produced him. He established two colleges and five periodicals, along with being an evangelist and farmer. He was a companion of Alexander Campbell as well as his stern critic. He was among the first in our history to catch the vision of the unity of all believers, and this book will cause you to love him for that. Above all this it is a book in Americana, taking you to our early frontier life, the nightmare of the Civil War, and the era of reconstruction. 4.95 in hardback.

We still have 30 or 40 copies of *The Lord's Supper* by Warren Lewis for only 1.00. It seems that some imperfect copies got in circulation, for a few have been returned. If your copy has the pages out of order, return it to us and we'll send another.

Situation Ethics has by now been sufficiently talked about that you may be ready to do some quiet reading on the subject. We suggest *Situation Ethics* by Joseph Fletcher (1.95), followed by *The Situation Ethics Debate,* edited by Harvey Cox. (1.95) The latter is a collection of reactions from mothers, students, ministers, scholars, along with reviews in many journals. Then a reply from Fletcher.

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